

New anti-counterfeiting devices delayed

By Roger Boye.

Uncle Sam has again postponed the printing of "greenbacks" with new anti-counterfeiting devices because of ongoing technical problems.

Two years ago this month U. S. Treasurer Katherine D. Ortega said the bills would make their debut by 1989, rather than in 1987 as had been planned. The government now hopes to begin production in the early 1990s.

"We've got to be certain quality will be perfect before we go ahead," said Ira M. Polikoff, a spokesman for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which makes U. S. paper money. "We maintain very high standards."

Under current plans the new Federal Reserve notes will have:

- Microprinting around the center portraits (the tiny letters

will be visible under magnification).

- A clear polyester thread embedded in the paper and running vertically through each bill to the left of the portrait.

- A secret security device—dubbed "taggant"—that could be read on machines in Federal Reserve banks, allowing officials to cull out counterfeit bills.

Technicians still are having trouble with the polyester threads, which tend to move within the paper during high-speed printing. That problem has caused much of the delay in issuing the new notes.

All three changes are expected to make U. S. money more difficult to duplicate accurately on color photocopiers, which could be widely available by the mid-1990s. Federal Reserve notes already contain several other coun-

terfeiting deterrents, such as finely printed portraits and paper containing tiny color fibers.

Polikoff said that once production begins, officials will make \$100 and \$50 notes first and gradually work down to the lower denominations. Information printed on the threads—such as "USA 100" on the \$100 notes—will be visible if the bills are held to a light.

Meanwhile, the U. S. Secret Service reported that it confiscated \$121.5 million in bogus currency during fiscal year 1988, less than one percent of which was produced on color copiers.

The professional counterfeiter using offset printing still is the biggest source of funny money, according to a Secret Service spokesman. In fiscal year 1987, the government found \$71.6 million of fake "greenbacks."